



## Court Improvement Program

# Community Improvement Councils News January— March 2019

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## April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month

All dependency and child welfare system professionals are essential to preventing child maltreatment in Nevada. To help with this critical work the Child Welfare Information Gateway has released the *2019 Prevention Resource Guide: Strong and Thriving Families*.

The *Prevention Resource Guide* is designed to help individuals and organizations in every community strengthen families and prevent child abuse and neglect. It focuses on protective factors that build on family strengths to foster healthy child and youth development. The *Guide* is broken into six chapters including:

- Strengthening individuals, families, and communities
- Working with families using the protective factors
- Using protective factors as a framework for your community partnership
- Protecting children
- Tip sheets for parents and caregivers
- Resources

The Tip Sheets are specifically designed for dissemination to caregivers, parents, and community partners.

Copy link below to download or order your free copy:

[https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resources/resource-guide/?utm\\_source=03.19.2019&utm\\_medium=eblast&utm\\_content=guide&utm\\_campaign=NCAPM19](https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing/preventionmonth/resources/resource-guide/?utm_source=03.19.2019&utm_medium=eblast&utm_content=guide&utm_campaign=NCAPM19)

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## ♪♪♪ How Much is that Doggie in the Courtroom? The One with the Waggly Tail! ♪♪♪

The 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial District knows. Walking into a courtroom is an intimidating experience for most of us. Imagine how terrifying it is for a child. Especially when entering a room filled with strangers and even people who may have hurt you. And, then, there is that stranger in a black robe sitting high up and towering over everyone. The 6<sup>th</sup> JD now has a Support Dog in the court room during dependency cases.

In January, 2019, the Sixth Judicial District Court, Humboldt County Nevada, implemented a pilot program allowing “Gracie”, the golden retriever therapy/facility dog to be present during dependency court hearings. The dog’s calm, loving demeanor was expected to decrease the stress and anxiety that may affect children and parents while in the court setting.

“Gracie” also provides added support to families, if a parent is testifying about some very difficult and serious childhood trauma or other issues that are upsetting. In comes “Gracie”, to sit near the witness on the stand to provide needed comfort.

The American Humane Society’s Manual on Therapy Animals Supporting Kids (TASK) Program\* explains how therapy animals can calm a child; thereby resulting in more efficient and accurate testimony and less trauma to the child. The 6<sup>th</sup> JD has, indeed, witnessed this first

hand. Additionally, the court has noticed that “Gracie” helps the parents bond with their children while in court; an unintended, but very much appreciated, side-effect.

Master Gabrielle Carr reports that, in addition to support for families in dependency cases, Gracie also regularly offers comfort in the local school system. Gracie even “writes” a *Dear Gracie* (just like *Dear Abby*) column once a month in the local newspaper.

\* Copy and paste the link below.

[Therapy Animals Supporting Kids \(TASK\) Program](#)



## Implementation of The Family First Prevention Services ACT Has Been Delayed in Nevada

The Division of Child and Family Services has elected to delay the implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act, as allowable by the federal government. The delay was requested to allow additional time to accomplish several goals that are critical for effective implementation including:

- Revisions to Nevada regulations to include standards identified within the National Family Foster Model Licensing Standards
- Changes in statute to ensure alignment with the requirements of qualified residential treatment program (QRTP) placements
- Ensuring that Nevada is prepared with an adequate service array to place a more significant emphasis on prevention services
- The possibility of needing to revise NRS to accommodate the federal requirements

The Division of Child and Family Services is in the process of initiating a contract with a national technical assistance provider from the University of Maryland that has supported other states in their planning and implementation of FFPSA. Our state team is working on an implementation timeline, and will share the timeline with the CIP at the next meeting on April 19.

## The Child and Family Services Review's Program Improvement Plan in Nevada

The genesis of the Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) and the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) goes back to the 1994 Amendments to the Social Security Act which authorized the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to review state child and family service programs to ensure conformity with the requirements in titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. The Children's Bureau (CB), part of the Department of Health and Human Services, administers the review system, known as the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR), and assesses states for substantial conformity with federal requirements for child welfare services.

The goal of the reviews is to help states improve child welfare services and achieve the following seven outcomes for families and children who receive services:

### Safety

- Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
- Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate

### Permanency

- Children have permanency and stability in their living situations
- The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for families

### Family and child Well-Being

- Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.
- Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.
- Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.
- The reviews also measure state performance on seven system factors, including the effectiveness of (1) the statewide child welfare information system; (2) the case review system; (3) the quality assurance system; (4) staff and provider training; (5) the service array and resource development; (6) the agency's responsiveness to the community; and (7) foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention.

The 2018 CFSR found Nevada to be out of substantial conformity with all seven outcomes and six of the seven systemic factors. Nevada is charged with developing a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) that addresses all areas rated as not in substantial conformity or suffer a \$ 1,068,285.00 penalty.

CIP was asked to co-chair and the courts were asked to work on the PIP Team designing improvements to achieve timely permanency. A team of multidisciplinary stakeholders including 9 judicial officers from 8 judicial districts (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> JDs), attorneys, child welfare agencies' staff and supervisors, CQI staff, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), and the Capacity Building Center for the Courts met for 2 months to develop goals, strategies and activities designed to improve Nevada's timeliness to permanency.

The Achieving Timely Permanency (ATP) Team's goal for its portion of the PIP is: *Nevada children have legal permanency and stability in their home lives and their continuity of family relationships and connections are preserved.*

ATP compiled the following strategies to accomplish this goal:

**Strategy 1:** Implement practice initiatives that improve families' involvement in the court hearing process to achieve desired permanency outcomes;

**Strategy 2:** Improve consistent practices and/or policies for concurrent planning, KinGAP, and hearing notification for foster caregivers;

**Strategy 3:** Improve earlier and ongoing relative identification and involvement by increasing dependency stakeholder interaction with families, parents, and fictive kin to enhance placement stability and permanency;

**Strategy Four:** Modify the termination of parental rights (TPR) process to reduce the time to permanency in adoption cases.

The ATP portion of the PIP is being combined with the other 3 Teams' portions to be sent to the Children's Bureau for review and questions.

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In 2010, each of the State's ten judicial districts created a Community Improvement Council (CIC) that focused on identifying barriers to timely permanent placement of children at risk. July 2015, the 11th JD was created. The CICs have been meeting regularly in their communities and at annual Summits where they have learned to interpret data specific to their districts, while creating strategies to reduce the amount of time that it takes to move cases involving children at risk through the court process. The overriding focus, in addition to the safety of the child, is to create an environment where the best decisions are made for each child.

**CIP Working for the Protection &  
 Permanency of Dependent Children  
 Visit Our Web Site**

<http://cip.nvcourts.gov>

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